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SUBJECT: GEORGIA DOMINATED MERKEL'S VISIT TO SWEDEN

Classified By: CDA SILVERMAN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B & D)

Summary

1. (C) Russia's action in Georgia dominated the discussions when Merkel visited PM Reinfeldt in Stockholm, August 25. Germany and Sweden agree that Russia must withdraw its troops from Georgia and that the Russian President must not sign the referendum recognizing Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Both support a "friends" gathering on Georgia to show support, but not a donor conference per se. End Summary.

Georgia and Russia

2. (U) Georgia dominated the discussions between PM Reinfeldt and Chancellor Merkel on August 25, according to contacts in the Prime Minister's office, MFA, and German embassy. At a joint press conference, Reinfeldt emphasized the importance of a full Russian withdrawal, stating "anything else would be unacceptable." He underlined that Georgia now needs support for its rebuilding and it is important to discuss how this should be organized. "It is significant to discuss the future of Russia and the authoritarian tendencies we are now seeing," he said. Chancellor Merkel stated that the decision in the Russian Duma to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia was against international law. "I expect the Russian President not to sign the resolution," she said. Both, however, stressed the importance of maintaining contacts with Russia. Merkel stated that it is no secret that Germany and Russia have common economical interests and added, "...but we cannot disregard our values."

3. (C) Contacts in the PM's office affirmed that the press conference reflected well private discussions between Reinfeldt and Merkel. They relayed also that the Swedish government remains in the planning stages for the Monday, September 1, European Council meeting and remains engaged with the French to "work issues out", i.e., whether Saakashvilli will attend. Whether or not he does, our contacts describe the summit as important because of the symbolism of the EU gathering to discuss the way forward with Russia. As for an international conference on Georgia, the German DCM told us that rather than a donors' conference, something more along the lines of a "friends" gathering to "show support" is what Merkel has in mind.

NATO

4. (U) Merkel sidestepped questions from the press regarding Germany's prior approach to a Ukrainian and Georgian NATO membership by saying that what was decided in Bucharest still stands. "What is discussed is not an immediate membership but a road towards membership. Ultimately that is a decision for the applicant states and NATO," Merkel stated. Asked whether Sweden would follow a possible Finnish NATO membership as a result of Russia's actions in Georgia, Reinfeldt made it clear that the issue is not on the agenda but that the countries tended to follow each other on these issues. "Most

of our international soldiers, men and women, are under NATO command, we are part of these structures in a good way, it is not like during the Cold War anymore," he said.

15. (U) Comment on atmospherics: Most of the Merkel-Reinfeldt meetings were one-on-one at the Swedish version of Camp David (Harpsund, at a lake north of Stockholm). By all reports, the relationship between Reinfeldt and Merkel is excellent. Bildt did not attend the meetings but remained in Stockholm for the annual gathering of all Sweden,s overseas ambassadors.
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